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Whose Love Was The Greater?

Beckwith

Julia (America)

JOHN F. BECKWITH, Ph.D.

[illegible] Love Was [illegible] Greater?

[illegible] from a [illegible]

By

[illegible] Beckwith, Ph.D.

THE SHAKESPEARE PRESS,
114-116 East 28th Street,
New York.
1913.

JOHN P. BROCKWAY, Ph.D.

Whose Love Was the Greater?

Undated Leaves From a Diary

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

By

JOHN FRANCIS BECKWITH, PH.D.

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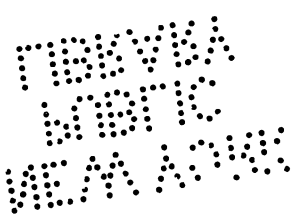
To the *one* woman whose love
is the greater—whoever
and wherever she be
—I dedicate
these pages.



PREFACE

The great social evil—divorce—is principally caused through faithlessness of man. The world judges men and women on different and, to the man, unjust scales—unjust because it practically allows him that which it condemns in a woman, and thus permits him to think that faithlessness is far less of a sin than it really is. The unpardonable sin in woman is a pardonable sin in man—a mere trifle. But while the unwritten man-made laws shield and overlook the sexual sins in man, there are laws that judge men and women alike—the laws of God. In the heart of each man and woman is a part of the Creator Himself. We call it conscience. While it does not always keep us from erring, it tells us when we do wrong. No matter how strong the sexual impulses are in man, he cannot commit an act of unfaithfulness without the voice of conscience crying out against it. Around his soul he lights the torturing flames of hell. It is in an effort to show this that these pages were written. Naturally then they must be pages of weakness, for *no man who is strong in his love and who has taught himself to master his impulses, could sin against the one woman to whom he has promised love and all that which love holds and means.*

We might contend that weakness should not

be portrayed in books and stories, but—inasmuch as weakness is more common than strength, a fact the divorce courts of to-day bear only too plainly evidence of—should we not picture life as it is? We admire that which is strong and beautiful, yet it is not through the mirror of strength and beauty that we perceive our own faults, but by looking deep into our own souls, seeing ourselves—not as men see us—but as God sees us, without masks, without self-deceit.

The name we cut in the young life's bark
Shall stand when the hair turns gray,
And a finger shall point at each moss-hidden mark
Before God on the Judgment Day.

Flickering sun-rays lie over the dark olive-green waters of the brook. And high in the quivering air the sky-lark soars sunwards, singing its song, clear and vibrant, over meadow and brook.

Westward lies the moor with its lilac blue heather like a restless, tide-swept sea. And deep down in the valley the brook winds its way between pasture and lea, where drooping willows are shading.

Far behind are the vast, dew-wet forests.

And the sun shines from a cloudless sky. Not a leaf is stirring, not a blade of grass is trembling.

Wide, infinite stillness reigns.

And I stand up here on the crest of the hill among the white-barked birches, looking down on the beauty of it all, on the wonders from God's hands.

I have been here for hours, dreaming the dreams of youth and summer.

* * * * * *

The dim, vast shadows are falling.

The sun is setting. Flaming red and purple rays are tinting the light clouds that rise on the horizon. And the woods grow dark and lilac in the dying day.

From the deep, cool glen the wood-thrush is singing its vesper song.

The fire-flies are flitting.

From the waters of the brook rises the vapor, veiling meadow and marsh in a gray summer-mist.

The sun has sunk. The twilight hour has come. And dew-drops are falling, softly as the spring kisses its young flowers, as I descend the hill—homeward bound.

Night is drawing near.

* * * * * *

I feel so young, as if years had been taken from my shoulders. Is it the fragrance of flowers, the infinite stillness—or is it the zephyr of summer wafting all cares from my brow?

There, far to the East, lies the great city with its reek of sodden air from thousands of chimneys; with men and women hustling by in a ceaseless stream; with its nerve-racking noises;—the never resting city.

The contrast here—is that what makes me feel lighter at heart? The deep, unbroken peace of nature.

There sits a little finch on a swaying twig in the linden that shades my window. He is singing his song, calling for his mate. And the sun shines on the red roofs of the village.

Thou glorious, radiant sun, send your rays in here, deep down in the deepest depth of my heart that it may be summer of life in my soul.

* * * * * *

I have seen her.

She came across my path—a hind of the deep woods. A fleeting glance—and she had gone.

But the sunlight was on the dark brown locks and there were red roses in her cheeks. For one short moment I looked into her eyes. Then the silky soft lashes closed over them.

I saw her again as she disappeared down in the valley where the red roofs hid her from my view.

But the gleam in her eyes beneath the long shading lashes—shall I ever forget that?

* * * * * *

Weird dreams came to me last night.

I stood on a mountain top, flushed with the rose of dawn. Far, far beneath me in that dizzying deep lay a world; but the clouds that hung over the mountains hid it from my sight.

By my side stood a woman. She spoke to me, and the earth shook. She trembled and fell—deeper and deeper, faster and faster.

And then from the depths her eyes met mine, and they drew me. I trembled. I lost my balance and fell into the depths with her. Once more our eyes met, but then they were lusterless in death.

I do not believe in dreams. But the gleam in her eyes, I remember it still. It is as if it were eating its way into my very soul—deeper and deeper.

* * * * * *

I met her in the deep woods on the other side the brook.

I was sitting on a stump among the white-barked birches.

The sunspots flickered on the moss-grown ground, and there were green canopies and sun-stretching twigs and streaks of blue skies over my head.

Then she came singing through the woods. And it seemed that the song-sparrows and warblers ceased their song to listen to her.

She did not see me until she was so near that I could have touched the hem of her skirt. She started, and a cry—faint as the rustling of a leaf at zephyr's touch—came from her coral lips.

"How you scared me!" And then she laughed, and her laughter seemed like the rippling of crystal waters over myriads of pebbles.

"I beg your pardon," I said; "Sylphs seldom cross a man's path, and when they do, a mere man is naturally stricken dumb, or I should have warned you of my presence."

Again she laughed that clear, rippling laughter.

We walked together in the stillness of the woods, and we talked empty words. She stopped where the path branches off.

"This is my way," she said. "Another time you must not scare me."

Again I heard her song—farther and farther away.

Then the deep silence of the lonely woodlands fell.

Only a solitary crow flew with its hoarse cry over the whispering green canopies.

And I went back again and sat down on the stump among the white-barked birches.

I waited—waited in vain—

Waited till the twilight shadows sank over God's fairyland.

Then I went slowly home.

* * * * * *

I came through the valley to-day, the valley with its vine-decked cottages in the golden gleam of the afternoon sun; and a strange thrill swept through me as I saw her.

A large yellow straw hat shaded the dark brown locks and her soft white dress clung around her youthful figure. Her head was lightly bent, and in one hand she held a bouquet of yellow and red roses.

She did not know that I was following her.

And of a sudden she disappeared in one of the cottages.

But on the road lay a rose, red as the heart's blood.

I stooped and picked it up, and when I came home I pressed a kiss on its velvet petals. Then I put it in a flower-glass.

And the air in the room is filled with its fragrance.

* * * * * *

I am a stranger to myself.

Since I have seen her I have changed.

My thoughts are of her, my dreams are of her. Everything else seems to me so utterly, utterly empty. And yet I do not know her.

* * * * * * *

Her rose in the flower-glass has bent its tender stem. One by one the blood-red leaves are falling. Only the fragrance lingers—a few short hours, a few days perhaps, then it too will vanish. And no human hand can give it back its petals or its fragrance.

She held it in her little white hand, and still it fades and withers. Death has no mercy. Death is terribly impartial.

Some time he will bend her slender white figure and spread his ashen gray cloak over her, and the radiant gleam in her eyes will die—the death of the rose.

Only not yet—not yet!

But there must be a land where the skies are always blue and the roses ever red.

* * * * * *

I have seen her again!

I met her on the road, gray with the dust of many cloudless days.

She bowed to me.

"This time you did not scare me—or perhaps I am getting real brave." And then she smiled.

We walked side by side. And I looked into those eyes, a sky blue as the purest indigo, a radiant, sun-kissed sky no cloud had ever darkened. I saw her smile, I heard her voice; and—once in a while—I felt her sweet breath like the scent of roses touch my cheek. And an unknown peace and happiness stole into my soul.

And when we parted I held her soft little hand in mine for one short moment. Then I went back.

The road was straight. Far, far into the unknown distance it seemed to stretch, dusty and shadeless.

I wanted no shade. There were summer and sunshine in my heart.

* * * * * *

Love comes like a thief in the night.

Somewhere in the long ago I read it, and the thought came to me as I lay awake last night.

Suppose—but no, I do not want to suppose.

One thing is sure, I am happy only when she is near.

Then it sings deepest in here where the heart is purest and best, sings with thousands of voices, sings unceasingly; sings as if every fibre in my heart had a beak to sing with, a throat to warble its love-songs.

Why is it?

* * * * * *

A week has passed since I saw her. Eight long, seemingly endless days.

Hour for hour has dragged by so slowly, so slowly.

I have roamed in the deep woods, in the valley, over the meadows and moors, but all in vain.

And I am longing, longing for a sight of her, longing as the wanderer in the desert longs for the sight of a cooling crystal drink.

* * * * * *

A little buzzing bee sits on my window pane.

He wants to get out, out to the flowers with their fragrance and honey.

I shall open the window and let you out. Fly your way far over the leaves of the linden, down in the valley, down to her. Sing your buzzing song! Tell her that, as you long for the sweet dust of the flowers, so do I long for her.

Fly your way, little bee, my messenger!

* * * * * *

At last!

She was sitting in the hammock among the flowers, reading. Her cheeks were white as the snow of winter, and the dark brown tresses made them look still whiter.

She looked up and smiled as I passed. But the smile seemed wearied.

I stopped. Was it a string in my heart that quivered at the sight of her, so pale, so little and frail, as if a draught of wind could have carried her away to the heavens above?

"Have you been sick?" I asked. But I had read the answer to my question in her face even before it was uttered.

"Yes, indeed, I have had to be a good girl and keep to my bed for almost two weeks. But now I am quite well again."

"I am very sorry to hear it," I said, but the words sounded hollow, unconvincingly in my ears. And yet, God knew I was sorry. But if I had dared my lips would have spoken no empty words, but my arms would have taken her in their strong embrace and held her close, heart to heart and lips to lips, shieldingly. And the red roses should have bloomed again in the marble-white cheeks.

But I dared not, so I thrust my hands deep in my pockets to keep them from mischief.

"I wondered why I did not see you—I missed you."

"You missed me?"—was it the red narcissus, or was it the carmine carnation that threw reflection on her cheek?

"Yes, I missed you; and I sent a messenger boy down to find you the other day. I did not know what had become of you, and I—I—well, the world did not seem to me just right; the sun did not shine as it used to do, and the messenger was to tell you all that."

"You sent a messenger boy? I am sure he never came."

"He didn't? The little rascal! And I gave him his liberty in exchange for his service. But then—well, you see, he was only a little honey bee."

She smiled, but the color in her cheeks had grown deeper.

I stood by the gate, and we talked for a long while.

And the shadows of the evening began to fall.

Then she arose and gave me her hand in farewell. And in the door she turned around and smiled.

And the daylight lingered throughout all the night.

* * * * * *

There is to be a ball in the village to-morrow night.

I wonder if she is coming.

And if she comes, will she give me the first dance? and the last, and—

It is dark and late.

But the day-dreams are mine to hold.

* * * * * *

A soft fine rain like a summer-mist is falling.

It is dripping from boughs and branches and twigs, drop by drop.

Let it rain! There are blue skies and sunshine in my heart.

I went down to the village last night. It was twilight yet, the lingering twilight of a summer day in the North.

On an open spot in the park they had erected a big tent. And there were flags and garlands and flowers and lights.

Two men sat stroking on the worn-out strings of cracked violins. A third one was playing the flute.

And the dance went on.

But she was not there.

I stood outside the tent leaning against the time-worn trunk of an old oak and looked on. Dance after dance they played, and laughter and cries mingled with the music to an unharmonic whole.

I grew tired and turned around to go home.

And there behind me she stood in the soft clinging dress, with her mother.

A white silk-ribbon was tied around her hair.

She saw me, and a smile like the sunlight over rippling water passed over her lips as she greeted me. I asked her for a dance, and we danced, she and I; and no princess was ever more sylphlike and graceful.

My arm was around her slender waist, and the dark vagrant tresses stroked my cheek.

And we wandered together among the shadows of the old trees till it grew late. Then I went homeward with her and her mother.

Soft silver rays from the moon's sheen fell on the dew-wet moss, and the shadows grew deeper and longer.

Out over the brook rose the vapors like misty veils.

But from far off we could still hear in the night the sound of the worn-out strings of violins.

In the East rose the dawn of a new day.

* * * * * *

We sat together in the shade of drooping willows on the narrow bridge that crosses the brook —she and I.

In her hand she held a white water-lily.

And I drank in with eyes and soul the beauty of her supple figure; the soft rounded bosom, the long lashes that shadowed her eyes, and the clear, rich color in her cheeks. Her youthful beauty held me in its thrall; I forgot to speak, forgot everything until suddenly her eyes flashed up into mine.

"How very interesting you are!" she said, and a seductive dimple showed in her cheek.

"I beg your pardon," I said, "I was thinking—"

"Indeed!" she interrupted with laughter in her voice. "And wonderfully deep thoughts they must have been. Some difficult mathematical problem I suppose."

"Something in that line," I answered; "trying to find out how a certain distance could best be bridged. The lily in your hand reminded me of a story, and that started the mathematical problem."

"I am very fond of stories," she said.

"So am I, providing they finish up to suit me. This was a story of a lily of the valley. It grew close to the brook, so close that the clear crystal water rippled around its tender roots, and the dew-drops pearled in its snow-white petals. One

day a big honey bee came flying out of the woods and sat down on a trembling blade. He had come from far off, was hungry and weary. He had found but few flowers on his way, and none whose honey was sweet enough. Then his eyes fell on the white lily, and he sat spellbound. Never had he seen a flower so pure and white and beautiful. And as he sat there on the softly swaying grass, he knew that henceforth there could be no flower in the kingdom of meadows and woods that could ever satisfy his hunger and longing—none save the lily. But the lily stood there with head held high; the tender stalk never bending towards the bee. Day after day the bee came and sat on the green grass, staring down to the white lily. And the days dawned and glowed and died, but the distance between them was never bridged. At last the longing grew too strong in his heart, and he spread out his wings and tried to fly across. But he had tarried too long; his strength had gone, and he did not reach the goal. Between the swaying blades he sank down; a shiver shook the transparent wings, and then it was all over. But the lily of the valley stood there proud as ever with her slender stalk unbent. That was the story I was thinking of. There are honey bees and flowers in life."

The tell-tale blood had flooded her cheeks, and I took both her hands. Soft and yielding, like white snow-flakes, they rested in mine.

"Margaret," I said, "I too have come from far off to tell the lily that I love her, love her with all the love my heart has to give."

I put my arm around her waist, and with my hand I lifted her head till her eyes, clear and blue as a mountain stream, met mine. I held her close to my heart, close to my lips and whispered:

"I love you, Margaret. I love you, lily of my heart, and I want you because I need you. I want you as my prisoner of love, to be kept in chains woven of heart-strings, chains of love. No king's ransom shall buy your freedom; under the wing of death you shall still be mine—mine before God and man."

I did not wait for an answer. Deep in the depths of the dark orbs I had read it. And I pressed my lips on hers in a long, quivering kiss and held her close to my wildly throbbing heart. And then two soft, soft arms stole around my neck, and glued to mine, her lips whispered my name.

And the sun shone, and the lark rose high in the air. Not a blade of grass trembled on the meadow, not a leaf stirred in the woods.

And the hours swept by. The sunset had dyed the day with purple glory when I pressed the last kiss on her coral lips.

* * * * * *

It is late. I cannot sleep. All my thoughts are with you, lily of my heart.

* * * * * *

She sent me a lily this morning—a single milk-white lily with her card.

On it she had written:

"To have and to hold. The lily belongs to the honey bee."

I have never known till now what happiness is.

There are so many poor lonely beings who know not a day of gladness or joy. Could I but give them half of mine, there would be more than enough left.

* * * * * *

The sun-rays are peeping in through my window, and the bee is flying his way down to the lily of the valley.

* * * * * *

I have a place where I keep the treasures, the memories my life holds dearest, the memories of every hour spent with her. And greater treasure no man can possess.

And the place is deep in my heart.

When centuries have passed, and human hands are digging up the graves of the long since dead, no one will find anything.

The memories will die with her and me.

But when the storm-winds sing over the white marble stones, the weeping willows will bend their trunks, and the naked, leafless boughs will sway in the winds.

Listen then!

For the willows shall tell of her, my white lily.

* * * * * *

We wandered together this evening.

It was late. The sky was studded with summer stars, the light of unknown worlds and far off spheres, perhaps long ago darkened.

Her head rested against my shoulder, and my arm held her close. We were silent, both of us, for there are times when words would jar on the stillness and peace of the hearts.

But we were dreaming in the realms of love, in the kingdom of Arcady.

She was my Queen, and I was her King.

And the zephyrs whispered in the leaves over our heads; the whippoorwills sang from the low-hung foliage.

But brighter than the millions of stars shone the love-light in her eyes.

* * * * * *

The waters are like the shadows of life.

Slumbering and still they can lie in the deepest depths of the soul. But when the storms rise over the waters, the shadows grow deeper and darker.

But the foaming, winter-gray waves of life shall never touch you. The spray of great waves shall never reach you.

Glittering, spring-blank shall the ocean lie in your soul.

For over your life the sun has risen never to set.

* * * * * *

Down in the garden stands a young oak.

In the gray bark we cut our initials, M and S.

Some day the tree will be old; the fine spring-green leaves will no longer sprout. The bark will crack, and no song-bird will build its nest in the naked twigs.

But the initials will still be there.

The harvest storms, and the winter nights' frost cannot wipe it off.

The moss may grow over it. But back of the green cover it will stand cut deep in the ashen-gray bark.

Still the tree is young and green.

And the birds are chirping and twittering from its foliage.

* * * * * *

My heart has but one thought, one longing, one craving: YOU!

But sometimes the longing can grow so strong that it tears in every heart-string.

Press your hand against my breast as hard as you can that it may cease. Put your soft arms around my neck; tell me that you are mine, my beloved, my queen, the one woman I longed for in the fairest dreams of my youth.

Then my longing shall cease.

And I shall draw you close; shut your eyes behind the silken lashes; let me wind my arms around your waist and kiss your lips, your eyes, your cheeks, your neck.

You are no longer the child but the woman, the one who shall be my wife. Wife and bride! Does not the sound of it carry breath of all that which is best and grandest in life.

But I do not think,—I am only longing.

* * * * * *

Your love is like the depth of great waters.
No one has measured them.
Deeper and deeper we reach, but the bottom is still unfathomed.

* * * * * *

I am counting the days and the hours.

Two weeks from to-morrow she and I shall meet in the little white-painted church.

And the home is ready to receive my bride.

She shall spread sunlight and happiness over it.

* * * * * *

To-morrow!

I am longing, longing, longing for the time to come when I can call her mine before God and man.

Mine, and mine alone!

But the hours are creeping so slowly by.

I must out. There is no space for my happiness in here.

Even the world seems too small to hold it.

* * * * * *

Be still! be still!

She is sleeping, my bride, my own.

She stood by my side yesterday in the church with orange blossoms in the dark tresses.

She was so white, lily white. But happiness had woven red roses in her cheeks.

And when we came home, when at last we were alone, she laid her head on my breast, and I stroked her silken hair softly and spoke to her out of my very heart.

Then she lifted her head, and the coral lips met mine in a long trembling kiss.

The bee sucked the honey from the white petals.

The dreams of the light summer nights have come true.

* * * * * *

The bridal night has gone.

The August sun is shining into the room where sleeps my little bride, so white and pure; sleeps the sleep of love and happiness.

At your bed I shall sit night after night through life, watching over you that no shadows shall ever cross your dreams.

And with a kiss I shall wake you, heart of my heart.

* * * * * *

What shall I write? I know not.

I feel as if my life had just begun. Before me lies the world with sunlit days, brighter and more beautiful than ever before.

God, let me keep my Paradise, and I shall claim no share of Thy heavens beyond.

Lily of my heart!

She is sitting in there embroidering. Now and then she will look up, and our eyes will meet, just as if she knew that my eyes could not tear themselves loose from the sight of her. And then it shines with infinite joy and nameless happiness out of the deep dark orbs.

The lamp is burning and throws soft shadows over the room.

But the dying gleam of the August evening lingers still as if it were loth to leave, to pass on to other shores, where perhaps no happiness dwells.

But over her home and mine no shadows shall ever fall.

It shall forever be springtime here.

* * * * * *

To-morrow the days of our honey-moon are past. Yet they shall never be bygone. For her life and mine shall be one long honey-moon stretching into eternity, in this world and in all the worlds beyond.

To-morrow my work calls me back. Three months I have rested, shut out all thoughts of business, and lived in a dream-world where cares and worries never dwell.

Three months ago I did not know of your existence. But God knew, and He led our ways that our paths might meet—never to part again.

The stars are shining from a clear sky. And through the open window the soft fragrance of many flowers are wafted on the summer evening's breezes into the room.

And out in the deep stillness of the twilight sounds her song. She sings of the moorland, of her childhood's home with the meadows and rills; the home where she dreamed so many childhood's dreams.

But the years have gone by. And the child is no longer a child but a woman and wife—my wife.

The dreams from the lilac heather are but memories now. But the clear mellow voice of the child sounds yet in the stillness and peace of the summer evening.

Child of my heart, wife of my soul, bride of my being! Sing on, sing on through life, for then

I shall know that you are happy, and only through your happiness can I be happy.

* * * * * *

When years have passed by, and white silver-threads are in your hair, and the evening of life is near, love shall still reign in your heart, the bridal smile still linger on your lips.

In you I do not fear age.

For the child will live in you till the end of the days.

No furrow, no wrinkle shall put their mark on you.

My love shall spread smiles on your lips and smiles in your heart.

When years have passed, when white silver-threads—like winter's snow—steal into your tresses, then you are still:

My manhood's bride.

* * * * * *

How I long for the time when I was not kept in bounds by my daily work. I am home but little now.

I have to leave early, and it is late when I reach home. Then I am tired and need rest.

And my poor lily—she does not complain; but love is keen, and her eyes are tell-tale eyes.

All through the long days she is alone, alone among strangers in a strange city. The lonely stretches of moorland, the barren, God-forsaken deserts know not the loneliness of the friendless souls in the great cities.

And I wonder if she longs for the stillness and peace of the land over yonder where the lark has ceased to sing, where autumn has bound her sheaves, and where only the falcon wings his way with steady beats over the moor—far, far away.

* * * * * *

I took off to-day.

And we walked once more in the woods where the autumn had already tinted the foliage.

She was so happy to be out again, away from the smoke-reeking city.

And the summer roses came back to her cheeks.

But the leaves were falling in scarlet and red-brown drifts from twigs and boughs; yellow, withered, dying leaves. And no birds twittered from the half-naked branches; no deer sprang lightly over the still green moss.

The stillness of death reigned.

* * * * * *

I read a name in the death list to-night. It called back to my memory a November evening years ago. I was walking slowly homeward through Sixth Ave. Ahead of me walked a girl; and, as I passed her, she looked at me with big pleading eyes. The strong impulses of youth were in me, and I spoke to her.

And then we walked together, and she told me of her life while she clung to me almost like a child.

She seemed so little and frail, and her eyes were dim with unshed tears.

It was the old, old story. She had given her love to a man, had given all a woman could give, and he had deceived and left her. She had no one to care; and she had drifted from the narrow path where no roses bloomed onto the broad road; had fluttered from flower to flower like a little butterfly. Now she was tired and weary, and her heart craved for but one flower to lean her head against.

But the days had come, and the days had gone. Many had wanted her, but no one had wanted her to have and to hold. The world had judged her as the world judges.

Now the butterfly is dead. It was her name I read in the death list to-night. With broken wings that never again shall bear her from flower to flower, she lies cold and stiff in the lonely little

room high up under the roof. Forgotten of all, forsaken of all—save God.

No flowers will cover her pall; no flowers will lie on her grave, and yet she has winged her youth and life away in joyless fluttering. Little passion flower!

Peace be with you, you little erring soul! Now at least you have found the peace you longed for as the days glided by. For God, who is all love, knows the transgressions, and He judgeth not as the world judges.

The evening has come; the evening that knows no night nor dawn. And the shadows are falling over earth. But over you forgetfulness shall spread its merciful veil, poor little forlorn soul.

* * * * * *

There are men who love flowers and cultivate them.

Sometimes they grow; sometimes they wither and droop and die.

I too am a gardener. My heart is the sod where the lily grows. My love is the sun.

Can a flower grow by sunlight alone?

There is night-dew in life—night-dew and frost.

But I give what I have—all—all.

And more I cannot do.

* * * * * *

I lay awake last night; I could not sleep.

The storm-winds sang their October songs in the mist and blackness of the night. Sobbing and sighing, weeping over the grave of the summer, the summer that never, never would come back.

It was dark in the room. She lay by my side and slept, but I could not see her, and I felt so alone.

And then the thought struck me: had I been all I should have been to her, all she expected me to be? And the answer was: No, and it found echo deepest in here.

The summer passed by with its sun-kissed memories. I remembered so clearly every day, every hour. And the blood throbbed richer and warmer through my heart.

Surely it was love that I bore her—it could be nothing else. And I raised myself to a sitting position and bent over her and kissed her full on the lips. And in her sleep she threw her arms around my neck. Soft as the down of young birds they were.

Then peace came to me, and I slept.

But outside the storms were still singing their wild, melancholic songs.

* * * * * *

Summer with quivering light!

But I feel that the harvest storms are near when one by one the leaves shall fall; and the day will come when the leaves of my life's tree shall be torn off. Cold and chill they will fall on your heart, leaf by leaf, until only the naked branches are left. But then your love will be strong enough to carry the withered leaves.

And there will be a spring after this. Then they shall vanish like dust hidden away in the mists of forgetfulness.

My life's tree shall again carry green leaves, for you shall be the spring-sun in my heart.

* * * * * *

She was sitting in the drawing room when I came home, and I sat down by her side.

The time had come when I must tell her all. I had kept silent until now, because as a wedded woman she would understand. The clear crystal waters of the brook had rippled at her feet; the dust of the roads had whirled high above the snow-white petals, leaving them untouched and pure. Could I have torn the wormwood leaves of my life's book out and one by one laid them before her without staining the purity of her virgin soul? She knew not the world then, and not in that way should she learn to know it.

I took her little hand in mine, and she lifted the fair face I loved so well, and looked at me questioningly.

"Margaret," I said, "there is something I want to tell you. I should perhaps have done so before now, but when I have told you, I think you will understand why I did not. There must be no secrets between us. I know your heart holds none; but there are leaves in my life's book you have not yet read, and I want you to know them. When one secret steals in, others will follow, and the little cleft will widen into a yawning gulf which no time, no words, nothing can ever bridge. I know that what I must tell you will leave an ache in your heart; that your ideal of manhood, which you thought incarnated in me, will be wrecked—and yet, Margaret, you would not want me to keep silent."

The color had left her cheeks, but her eyes never wavered, and there was no tremor in her voice as she said:

"No, Sven, though I would not ask it, I would rather you tell me whatever you think I ought to know."

She was waiting and steeling herself.

Her hand still rested in mine.

But the moments went by one by one, and I did not speak though I knew the task was before me and must be done. But what man would not hesitate to tear down what he has built, stone for stone, not knowing if he would ever be able to build it up again. And yet, I knew her love, and knew that there was no sin her love could not forgive. If I tore down the castle in her heart, she herself would build it up, and build it on rock where no life-storm could ever crush it. It was the thought that I was about to throw shadows over her life, shadows I might never be able to remove completely, that made me hesitate. But I had fought the battle out within my heart, and I knew that, if I would preserve my manhood's self-respect, I must tell her. I knew too that, even though I shattered the ideal in her heart, she would think more of me for telling her.

And then, at last, I spoke.

"I have never told you why I gave up the idea of becoming a sculptor, nor how the artistic aspir-

ations and ambitions were deadened within me. I had shown some talent, in fact, some of my work had been uniformly praised, and a great future had been bestowed upon me by the critics, who are ever on the alert to discover a dawning light that will mark a new epoch in art. But there are false prophets among the critics too; at least in my case they proved sadly mistaken; and I smile when I think of the glowing descriptions of the 'wonderful art that shone forth in every line and curve of the young artist's work, stamping it with a born master's indelible mark.' But, at that time, I took it seriously enough because I had confidence in myself. And when my college days were over, I rented a studio and set down to real hard work. After several fruitless attempts to find a girl who would, at least to some extent if not fully conform with my idea, I succeeded in finding a model, whom even my youthful idealistic fancy could find nothing to improve on. She was exceedingly pretty, of a rare beauty that unconsciously held the eye captive. She came daily and stood before me, and the work progressed. I was proud of it. But it was never finished. The model became my mistress before it was completed.

"She came to me day after day, and the tie between us grew stronger. I loved her in a way, not with my heart, but with my eyes and senses, just as we love a beautiful flower. We pick it up,

draw in its sweet fragrance and keep it till it fades, and then—then throw it away. Just like that, only I never quite forgot her, though the tie has long ago been broken, and though she has passed out of my life more than two years ago.

"I was alone then, Margaret. Death had stepped over the threshold of my childhood's home, and had come again and again and had taken of the best I had—father, mother, and sister, until no one but I was left. It is not well for man to be alone, but I was alone—alone as the Christ of yore who had not where to lay his head. And when she stirred up the slumbering passions of my being, I caught her in my arms as a drowning man will catch at a straw, without thoughts, without regret.

"She was motherless and fatherless as I. She had travelled with a circus; but the roaming life had left no mark on her. She was pure and innocent when she came to me, compelled by necessity to make a living for herself in whatever way that offered itself. And this I know, that wherever life may have thrown her since I saw her last, she is still the same pure girl. For we cannot call the woman impure who yields herself out of love, in love, and with love to one man, and remains true to the only passion she has ever yielded herself to. Marriage or no marriage, it cannot make any difference in the eyes of God, and He alone is the judge.

"She had no place in my heart. Her name was written on the pages of desire only. But I knew that she had given all, and out of duty and pity perhaps, I asked her to become my wife. And I should have married her had she been willing. But she refused, and I never understood why. But one evening she put her golden-haired head close to my cheek and whispered to me: 'Sven, I shall not come again; but I want you to know that in all this wide, wide world, I have loved no one but you, and wherever life may see fit to throw me, I shall love no one but you. I shall never reach port, because the only port where I could cast my anchor would be with you, but I love you too dearly to do so. Some day you will understand. You will not forget me; I do not want you to forget, for every thought you send me I shall feel deepest in here, and they shall be the sunrays of my life.' Then she threw herself around my neck and kissed me passionately, and in that trembling kiss I felt all the love her life would ever have to give. I wanted to hold her back, but she tore herself loose and ran out of the room. She was gone, and she kept her word. I never saw her since, nor has she ever sent me word of any kind.

"I was alone again. And the days drifted into weeks, and the weeks into months, and time softened and blurred the lines of the past. And then you came, like a draught of spring, like a glimpse of the sun I did not seem to know. And I felt that

with you alone was peace. And I gave to you the claim of every future day and hour;—not of the past—for they were not mine to give. I gave you what no woman has ever owned: my heart's love, pure and unstained.

"For what I gave her and took I have no regret. For I believe that both she and I are better for having known each other. No woman can attain the height of perfect womanhood before love has sprouted into bloom in her heart; and no man is the loser by having a good woman's love bestowed on him, even though he cannot return it."

I had told her all. For a long while she sat silent, very, very silent with her head bowed low. Then she arose and pressed a kiss on my forehead.

"Thank you for telling me," she said and left the room.

But when she came back, hours after, I could see that she had wept.

* * * * * *

You built a castle with gilded rooms and halls
around the dearest treasures of your life.
You gave it towers and spires that rose heaven-
wards.
And then it crumbled and fell in the darkest of
the night.
But you built it up again on the same spot.
With gilded halls, but without towers and spires.
If it crumbled and fell again?
You would not have the courage to build it anew.
Even though the castle held your dearest treas-
ures,
Even though your life's hope still lingered in
your heart.
For, if it fell, you would know it was not worth
rebuilding.
But the castle you built shall never fall again.

* * * * * *

A week has passed since I told her.

I do not feel lighter at heart; something is still pressing in here with iron hands.

I am not happy and carefree as I was. And she too seems to bear a burden since I told her. Shall it come between her and me?

It is as if we were gliding away from each other, farther and farther away.

She has grown so quiet and silent, and her eyes have lost their radiance. And yet I know that she loves me; I can see it in every look, can read it deep in the depths of her eyes, can hear it in the sound of her voice.

But sometimes I wish that she did not love me.

And I do not know why.

* * * * * *

I have much to do; but I am glad of it. The more work the better! Then I can forget, at least for a time, that there is something missing in my happiness.

I come home late, and I reproach myself. I could come earlier, could hurry more, but—the truth is, I do not long to be home.

And day after day the gulf is widening.

How will it end? In the long nights when I lie awake, thinking and thinking, I can hear her tossing restlessly. And sometimes she starts up in her sleep with a deep sigh that cuts in my heart.

What can I do? I know but this, that—one way or another—it must come to an end.

I have lost faith in my own love—that is the terror of it. Has she lost faith too?

Once I told her that no tear should ever stain her face, no sorrow ever cast its shadow over her life.

And now!—My God, help me!

* * * * * *

One month has passed since I told her.

This should have been a diary, but there are times when I cannot bring myself to write.

I have learned to bear my doubts and cares alone.

She believes in my love again, the love I know now that I do not possess.

Lily of my fancied love!

She is singing—as she did that evening long ago—not of the far off moorland, but the beautiful song of a king's love:

"He comes, he comes, her king of kings
On his fiery steed, on his love-strong wings,
Borne on the wind. And it sings and sings
In her heart as he flings
Himself from the saddle and holds her close—
Rose of the wild-wood, his rose, his Rose.

"Her heart she threw 'neath the crushing hoof,
When under the time-worn, moss-grown roof
Of her lonely hut he called her his Queen,
And his kingdom her heart in the dream-night's sheen.
And it sings on the strings of her heart as she clings,
Like a rose of the wild, to her king of kings."

Wildly, wildly the storm sings out there. But in here it sings, with the sound of breaking strings,

like the dying tones of a harp: "Jesus, Maria, give me death!"

* * * * * *

The first snow of the year is falling.

Softly and silently the white crystal flakes are sinking over earth and sea, wrapping forest and field in the winter's shroud.

But there will be a spring after this.

Then tender shoots shall sprout; from the grave of winter shall rise a young spring-clad world; and the birds shall sing again: Glory to the sun!

But the spring is still far, far away.

* * * * * *

Christmas is drawing near.

And, like a child, she is longing for it to come. And I—I could weep if I had tears to soften my eyes.

The Christmas peace cannot come to me before the peace of my heart returns; and it will never, never come back.

I have lost my heart's peace forever and evermore.

* * * * * *

Christmas!

The heavens studded with millions of stars; but the earth is dark and still.

The chiming of church bells has ceased, and no outburst of childish joy breaks on the stillness and peace of the Christmas night.

A lonely wanderer passes through the deserted streets. He walks so slowly as if he had nothing to hasten to. I too am lonely.

She is lying in there waiting for me. She will thank me for this evening, for every little remembrance. But the words will jar on my ears because I know I have not deserved her thanks. Could I but open my heart to you, could I but tell you that there was a time when I believed that you were everything to me; but it was only deceit. Could I tell you all that, perhaps then I should gain back my heart's peace.

But I cannot; for if I did, then you would lose your peace. And mine is the fault. You are not to blame. You loved me, and—worst of all—you love me still with all your heart. But I—I have never loved you.

And just because your love is so great, you are blind to my faults. The truth, the terrible truth that my heart does not hold you, you shall never know.

Like the wanderer out there I shall walk my thorn-strewn way all alone. Over my life's path no gleam of stars or suns shall fall.

So fare thee well, thou Christmas eve, the saddest, loneliest Christmas I have ever lived.

Peace on earth to men of good will!

* * * * * *

The old year is passing into memory's shadow-land, whence nothing shall ever return.

Slowly, mechanically the hands on the clock move towards the end. Restlessly, ceaselessly.

Soon the sound of the last stroke shall ring out in the midnight hour. The whistles will blow; the horns will shriek, and from the grave of the dead year rises a new.

But while I sit here waiting, the old year passes once more before me day by day.

There was a time when I thought that all the riches in the world were mine; and yet I was poorer than the poorest beggar.

And the fall was deep, deep as the fall that night in my dream when I stood by her side and the mountains shook.

There was a time when the sun shone over green meadows.

And the birds were singing, for it was summertime.

But since then the leaves have withered. The green meadows have grown brown, and the waters of the brook are stilled and frost-bound. No glittering rays! No bird-throat sings out its joyful song. For winter has come.

And in my heart summer has been, and now winter has chased away the warmth and presses around it with chilled, ice-cold hands.

In the glare of myriads of heavenly spheres the new year is drawing nigh.

And I fear all its long days and nights.

* * * * * *

The tones from the organ are ringing through the church, swelling in volume, and borne out over the stilled streets, calling, drawing.

But I pass by. I am no hypocrite yet.

The man-built house of God is no longer a place for me, because the only prayer I could say, would be one unworthy of one of His children:

"Lord, Thou who seest into the hearts of men, dost Thou not see the struggle that is raging within me? Why dost Thou not heal the wound? Or is it the punishment meted out to me—an ever burning hell in the soul's deepest core?"

And I pass by through the deserted streets.

Farther and farther off sounds the strain from the pipe organ, until the last faint tone dies away in the dreamy silence of the early morning.

* * * * * *

With a smile on my lips I play the comedy to her, while it weeps in here, tears that do not dim nor soften.

I have forgotten to be myself.

I speak to her about my love; I try to console her with loving words; but they sound so hollow in my ears that I wonder she does not hear the very hollowness of them. For they are lies—lies!

In the eyes of the world I am her husband. Am I in the eyes of God?

When shall the curtain fall?

* * * * * *

Sometimes a doubt creeps over me. After all, do I not love her?

If not, why should I care if she suffers?

And she would suffer.

But it is only cowardice, not fear of her sufferings, but fear of the world's judgment of her and me, fear of her judgment.

* * * * * *

No, no, and a thousand times no!

I do not love you; have never loved you.

I have lied to you, lied again and again.

Lord, my God, is it a sin?

I would nothing better but to tell her the truth; but to bring suffering and sorrow to another, is not that a sin too?

And which is the least?

Teach me, oh God, teach me!

* * * * * *

Clear, biting frost!

Like millions of sparkling diamonds lies the rime of the dawn on the roofs; and a mirrorlike ice covers the waters of the lake.

The rumbling of wheels, the clatter of hoofs sound faintly in the distance.

The air is clear and pure. And the sun shines.

But the sun's kisses are cold.

* * * * * *

My God, that too!

After supper she came over to me. I was reading the evening paper. She sat down on my lap and took the paper out of my hand, and then threw her arms around my neck. She leaned her cheeks, feather-soft and warm, against mine. And her eyes were almost shy, and yet radiant with happiness as she whispered in my ear:

"Sven, I am going to tell you something very important. I wanted to tell it long ago, but I was not sure. But to-night I know, and I am happy, oh, so happy. Don't you know why? Can't you guess? Hold your ear still closer, Sven—I am going to be a mother. Just think of it!" And she pushed my head back so that she might see the effect of her words. Then she shook her head. "Oh, you are a man, you cannot understand; you do not know what it means to a woman. I always thought that I should be dreadfully scared; but there is no fear in my heart, only an infinite longing for the time to come when I shall hold my child in my arms. My child! Won't he be cute! He is going to be a boy, I know it, and I want him to be just like his father, just like my big boy here. I shall have two boys then. Don't you shake your head; he is going to be a boy, because —well, just because he is."

And she laughed and pressed her lips on my forehead. Did she feel the drops of cold sweat on my brow? Did she see the pallor that must

have crept over my face? No, she saw far beyond me into the future where small soft, rounded, childish hands were stretched up towards her.

Is there anything in all the world that can compare with a mother's love, a mother's love even for that which is still unborn? God is infinite love, the incarnation of love; but I wonder if God's love can be greater than the love of a mother, who braves death and suffering and pain to give birth to her child.

Margaret! Margaret!

Surely no lily was whiter or more wondrously beautiful than you with the mother hope and mother longings in your eyes. And yet, why was my heart untouched?

The cup is full—full to the brim.

My God, let no drop fall into it that it shall not flow over!

* * * * * *

Tonight I bent my knee, for the first time in many months, to the Lord in prayer. And I prayed that my child and hers might be our child, that I—through it—might learn to love her.

It was a long time since I had prayed, and it seemed to relieve.

If I had but one, one soul in all the world to pour out my thoughts to, all that which presses in here! But I have none. Mother in heaven, your boy in his manhood's years needs your love, the love that could sift out the grain from the chaff, and bring comfort and rest and peace to my aching heart. I am so lonely.

But I will pray—pray often; though perhaps I have no right to do so. Because I do not come as a repenting sinner. I cannot repent, for if I have deceived her, I was equally deceived myself. I believed I loved her, I would have staked my very soul on it.

But the punishment is so great that the prayer is the prayer that rose centuries ago from the shadows of Gethsemane:

"Father, if possible, take this cup from me."

And like the Christ of yore I want to add:

"Thy will, not mine, be done."

But Christ was stronger than I.

And the days are gliding by; unceasingly the time rolls on. Some day—I know not when—I shall find peace.

Some day—when my heart is stilled forevermore.

I went homeward to-night through Lincoln Park.

The moon shone cold from the great vastness above. And over the shining ice of the lagoon the silver-stripe lay glittering, flickering.

Dark figures, outlined against the darker banks, glided by on steel-blue skates. And the band played, and the tones rang out over the frost-bound waters. No roaring of waves against the bulwark of the lake; the winter held even them in its bound.

And I stopped and looked.

Out there on the ice life's gladness and youth's hope seemed to live in every heart; but in here on the shore stood one who had forgotten what joy and gladness and hope were.

And I wished that I could live my life over again. How different it should have been!

* * * * * *

The blinking steel-blades cut over the ice, and I thought of the time when I myself was one among the many. And now—

A hand was laid on my shoulder—softly.

I turned around. And I looked into a pair of deep, blue eyes.

I saw but those eyes, nothing else. And the blood gushed feverhot and burning through my veins.

The love of my youth!

How did she come here? Where did she come from? What did she want? Where had she been?

But the questions that were on my lips never found words.

I stretched out my hands, both of them; and in the flickering unsteady light from the sheen of the moon I could see that they shook.

She took them both, but said nothing. She stood so quietly and just looked at me with those big, wonderfully beautiful eyes, as if she would read into the very depth of my soul.

More than two years had passed since I saw her last that evening when she threw her arms around my neck and told me that we must part. More than two long years. But they had left no trace on her, no wrinkles, no shadows.

Pure and white as of yore she stood there before me.

She called my name, the name she loved best of all, and a love that knew no bounds were breathed to me in that name. And I knew that the years, that had left no mark on her brow, had left her heart unchanged too.

She put her arm in mine, and it rested there unprotested. And step for step we walked away from the crowd and the lights.

Once she spoke to me softly and subdued, but the words did not reach my ear. It was as if some one walked by my other side, some one who resembled my wife. But it was only the deceit of the conscience.

At the bridge we stopped. Dark shadows lay there, and her features grew dim and blurred. But of a sudden I felt her breath, sweet as the scent of many flowers, waft my cheek, and then her lips touched mine. And in a moment I had thrown my arms around her and pressed her to my heart. I held her close to my wildly throbbing heart, so close that I felt as if I were crushing out her life's last breath in my embrace; and my lips sought hers time and again. Burning hot were the kisses I rained on her lips.

And between the kisses I heard her voice, like the murmur of a far-off brook, low and pleading:

"Oh, to die thus—crushed to death in my lover's arms,—crushed in his strong, strong arms—with my heart to his—heart to heart and lips to lips!"

Her eyes closed. And then, suddenly, I let her go, and my arms sank to my side. The storm had raged out, the storm of all the stored-up love in my heart that could not be stilled otherwise. Love for her or some one else, I knew not and cared not then. But if the jaws of hell had loomed beneath my feet with all its nameless terrors, I could not have kept from that one long embrace.

My lips were dry as if seared; it roared with the sound of great waves in my ears. I wanted to flee, flee from myself, from my feverishly throbbing blood. But my feet seemed rooted to the spot.

She spoke to me again, and once more I felt her lips on mine in the shadows of the bridge. Then she was gone.

My eyes sought her in the crowd leaving the ice, but they saw her not. She had gone as she came.

How long I stood thus I could not tell.

But at last I tore myself loose and went homeward. And it seemed to me that I had grown years older—many years older.

And the naked twigs and branches bent low and whispered: Unfaithful! Traitor! Deceiver!

But when I came home I complained of being tired and went to bed. I could not have looked her straight in the eye; willingly or unwillingly, I had deceived her, my wife.

And the dreams came.

Again she stood before me as she used to do years ago. Nearer and nearer she drew me, closer and closer, until again I felt her lips glued on mine. I could not breathe; something held me in a grip around the throat—tighter, ever tighter. It grew black before my eyes; I wanted with my last strength to push her away, but my arms were powerless.

Then I awoke with a scream.

Bent over me I saw my wife with anxious eyes.

"What is the trouble, dearest? Did you dream?"

"Yes—I dreamed."

Thank God, it was but a dream!

And the night drew towards dawn.

* * * * * *

I left the office early to-night. I wanted to meet her and tell her that I was married, that I could not in the future meet her, that she must not seek me. I wanted to tell her all. Perhaps also that I was not happy. Would she understand me?

She stood waiting for me when I came. She had waited long. And a smile, like the sunlight over still waters, rippled over her face as she saw me.

We walked all the way around the lagoon. And again she put her arm in mine, and I let it rest there.

And thus we went, so closely side by side that, when she spoke, her breath fanned my cheek like the zephyrs of summer.

With her eyes lifted to my face she began:

"When I left you two years ago, when I had told you that I could never be yours, I could have thrown myself on the ground and cried out my very heart and soul. It was for your sake that I went. I wanted you to be happy, no matter what the cost would be to me. I wanted it to be good-bye forever, and yet—so weak was I that I could not kill the hope in my heart that you would call me back. But you did not. And I knew then that I had lost you, lost the only one in all the world whom I had ever loved and ever could love. And not till then did I realize how hard, how terribly hard the burden, which I had voluntarily taken

upon my shoulders, would be to bear. But I wanted to leave you while you still loved me. I could never have lived to see your love grow cold, and I knew that, if I saw you daily, giving you all a woman has to give in life, the time would come when you would turn from me in disgust. You asked me to become your wife—but I refused because I felt that you asked it more from a sense of duty than out of love. And, if I had become your wife, I should no more have had the right to leave you, even should your love have faded and withered.

"I loved you, Sven, as no other woman on earth could love. Eternal punishment, eternal suffering would have had no terror for me if you had been near. There was nothing in all the world that I could not and would not have borne for your sake—except to lose your love. It was the fear of that that made me break the tie that bound us together. But what it cost me, no one but God will ever know. I gave myself a wound, which no years, no time, no, not eternity itself could ever heal; a wound that would go on bleeding ceaselessly to the end of all worlds, beyond the grave with its peace, beyond heaven's gates.

"But it is not of that that I shall speak.

"I left Chicago the next day and went West. I had to go, because I knew that, if you sought me out and repeated your pleadings, I would not have had the power to say no.

"But you did not come. And now I am glad of it.

"I would not go back to the circus life. I went on the stage; and during these two long years I have been playing, playing with a smile on my lips, laughter in my eyes, and tears in my heart.

"Many, many struggles have I had to fight. Twice I had to leave a company on account of the unwanted attentions of the stage manager and orchestra leader. And every evening, when the performance was over and I came to my dressing room, there were flowers and cards and invitations. The flowers withered where they had been placed, and the notes went unread in the waste basket. And yet they continued to come. But the thought of you gave me strength. You were my talisman; and I tried to make myself believe that, no matter where I were, your eyes were watching over me.

"And then, deepest in my heart, I had one ray of hope that bore me up, the hope that some day—sooner or later—I should look once more into the face I loved dearest of all, if it were but long enough to tell you that I had been true to you—not only in deeds, but in every thought. And God has been good to me; He heard my prayer.

"I have said good-bye to the stage and have rented a small apartment, and I am going to try to find something useful to do.

"And if—if I may see you once in a while, Sven, I shall be happy. Then I shall feel myself recompensed for all I have suffered during these two years. Night and day you have been in my thoughts. I knew you the moment I saw you last night; I felt you were near, even before I saw you. I fought with myself, but my love and longing were too strong; I could not leave you without at least a look at your dear face. And I spoke to you, though I had meant that you should not see me.

"But you have grown so silent and changed. There are dark shadows under your eyes and furrows on your brow. Have you too suffered, dearest?" And her soft arm slipped out of mine, and her two little hands caught my hand in them as she leaned sideways and looked at me with those wondrous eyes.

"Tell me all about yourself, Sven."

I looked down into her eyes. The words were on my lips, but they died away and were never spoken. I could not. The gladness in those steel-blue eyes, shadowed by the silken lashes, I could not darken. It would be a sin to tell her that I was no longer free; it was a sin not to tell.

But I was silent.

And we wandered together beneath the naked, leafless chestnut trees, away from the lagoon, from the crowd of glad men and women.

The sheen from the moon fell on the ground, making fantastic shadows. And once in a while

light clouds passed over the silvery surface and hid it. And then the shadows melted into one deep far-reaching shadow.

If I told her all, would she understand me? And if she did, what then?

"Have you nothing at all to tell me?" she asked; and it seemed to me that her lips quivered.

What could I say? What should I say? If she but knew how infinitely much I had to say; how I wanted to say it, and yet had neither words nor courage.

Her fair face was lifted to mine; then her eyes wavered. Had they read the truth in the depths of my orbs?

She stopped suddenly, her hand, clenched as if in pain, was pressed against her heart as if to still its fierce throbbing. And in the light from the moon I could see her breast rise and fall; her face white as the snow of winters.

"Sven," she called, and her eyes flashed appealingly up into mine. It was her appeal for the truth, untinged by any false hopes.

"Not to-night, Helen," I said. "Let to-night be sacred to the memories of bygone days. Do not ask me. Some day I shall tell you, tell you all. Only this, I wish to God that you had said 'yes' when I pleaded with you to become my bride before God and man. How much happier you and I should have been. You threw the gulf between us when you left that evening; we could have bridged

it even then. But now—now I see no way across. Do not ask questions, not to-night. I could not answer."

She drew a quick, quivering breath.

"I shall ask no questions, Sven," she said, and her voice sounded strangely hollow, and her eyes seemed to hold a world of untold agony. "When a woman loves, as I love you, she needs ask no question. I can wait, and I can bear much, if I but knew that you were happy."

Happy! God knew I was not. But she could not help.

We passed out of the park, and there were noise and clang of passing cars and many people.

No one must meet me there with her.

I took her head between my hands and kissed her full on the lips. "Good-bye," I whispered.

"Good-bye—till Friday," she whispered back. And I understood.

I saw her board a car; saw her turn around and wave her hand to me. The car started, and I looked after it till it disappeared in the distance.

Then I went home. But as I put the key in the key-hole I stopped. I heard my wife sing—the song from the moor.

Always the moorland, the land of her youth, of her girlhood's dreams. It was I who carried her away from there, away from the place she

loved so well. And what had I given her in exchange?

Nothing!—I took all—all—and gave nothing!

And yet, she does not complain.

Oh, if I could but take you back to the land of the meadows and leas; give you back all your girlhood's dreams untouched, unstained! But it is too late now.

And I opened the door and went in.

* * * * * *

White, pure crystal flakes are drifting from a winter-gray sky. The snow lies foot-high on the streets.

And I walk in fear.

Suppose she came to me, sought me out,—or, suppose I took sick before I had told her all, what would happen then?

The evening is still far off.

But go to her now I cannot.

And so I wade on through the snow.

* * * * * *

To-night it was I who waited for her.

It was still snowing. The light from the street lamps flickered faintly; the glass was wet with dew. But still I could see that she had wept. I did not ask her why—I knew.

"Come with me," she said. "It is too cold to walk to-night. Let us go home to my apartment, there we can talk uninterrupted. And you promised to tell me all."

Why had she not proposed to go home with me?

She lived up in Buena Park, opposite the cemetery.

A warm, bright fire burned in the old-fashioned hearth and threw its red glare over the dark green walls and on the carpet on the floor.

"Let me take your coat and hat," she said. "It will be too warm with it on, and I want to feel that you are not going right away. I just love this semi-darkness. I love it, because during the two years it was in the twilight hours, when daylight and shadows fought, that I have had my few happy moments, moments when I could forget everything else and just sit and dream. And for what we two have to tell each other, we need no light."

She doubted her strength; she relied on the shadows to hide her weakness.

"No, please sit over here in the rocking chair, and now—tell me all—all you want to tell."

I took the chair, and she sat down on a footstool, leaning her dimpled elbows on my knees.

The fire flickered on the hearth, and through the window I could see out over the dark, snow-powdered trees on the cemetery.

Over there was the peace, the deep unbroken peace of death.

For a while neither of us spoke.

I could hear her breathe; could feel her bosom rise and sink; but all I saw was her hair, the yellow, vagrant tresses that shone like gold in the glare from the hearth.

And I took her head between my hands, lifted it and looked into the dark blue orbs, deep, deep through her eyes into her very soul. Once more I wanted to see that gleam of infinite love; for I knew that in a short while, in a few fleeting minutes, when I had told her all, the light and happiness would have died from the eyes perhaps forever. But I must speak; I could no longer keep silent.

And with her little hand in mine I told her all from the day we parted; how and when I had met the one who now was my wife. I hid nothing; I told her all, told her that I had suffered because I felt that what I thought was love, had no place in my heart.

She sat so silent. Only once in a while it seemed to me that a tremor shook her.

And when I was through, she sat there immovable with bowed head leaning against me.

I could not console her; I had no consolation to give.

But I felt—now since I had told her all—as if my heart had grown lighter. Now, at least I had one who knew what I had suffered. How utterly, utterly selfish man is compared with a woman!

And the glare from the hearth grew fainter and fainter; the embers flickered; the darkness grew.

It was so still in the room; even her breathing seemed to have ceased.

Over the leafless trees of the cemetery flew a crow with hoarse cries that jarred on the stillness.

* * * * * *

The fire on the hearth had died out. It was dark in the room.

Very quietly she arose and went over to the window. Silently, motionless she stood there in the shadow of the curtains, with her head leaning against her arms that rested on the window frame.

I too arose and went over to her and put my arm around her waist. She trembled at my touch; her arms sank to her side, and she hid her face on my breast.

I stroked her velvet cheek softly and tenderly. It burned so warm, so fever-hot.

Down on the streets the light from the lamps threw shadows on the white snow.

It must have been late; the streets were empty and deserted. Dark, leaden-gray clouds, pregnant with snow, drifted over the garden of the dead, where white marble crosses rose over the lily-white cover.

She looked up.

In the faint light from the street lamps I saw once more her eyes. And my arm dropped to my side. I recoiled. I could have cried out in terror.

For the eyes I looked into were strange eyes; I knew them not—so hollow—so lusterless—so wild, and yet so dead.

It was my work—my work!

It was I who had stolen every ray of hope, every ray of sunshine out of those eyes.

Not a tear! not a dew-wet spot! so dry—so terribly dry!

Then, of a sudden, she tore herself loose from me. She trembled from head to foot; her cheeks were blanched and colorless, and her lips parted.

"Go—go!" she said, and the voice was harsh and hoarse—not hers. "Go, I tell you—go! go home to—your wife!"

She spoke with infinite bitterness. Why did I not sink in the ground under the weight of my guilt?

I could not bear it.

"I will see you to-morrow—I must see you! I shall come here whether you want me to or not. Do not feel that way—perhaps all is not lost—so much may happen."

But I knew that to me and to her all was lost forever and evermore. And she knew it too.

She laughed aloud, then stopped abruptly and threw herself on the couch, covering her face with her hands and sobbed as if her heart would break. I bent over her. I stroked the silky soft tresses.

"Go, Sven," she murmured pleadingly, and all the harshness had died out of her voice.

I knew it would be better to go and leave her to fight out the struggle in her own heart.

And I went home through stilled and deserted streets—home to my wife.

She had been waiting for me anxiously, afraid that something might have happened to me. I had no excuses to give; I had thought of none.

"I could not come earlier," was all I said.

And she asked no questions.

But when she kissed me good night, a tear fell from her eyes on my cheek.

I could not sleep.

Why was I born?

Your life I am ruining; her life I am wasting; and my own life is hell.

Lord, what have I done that I should be punished so hard?

Lord, what have these two done but that they love me?

Thou who art all love, forgive its transgressions.

Night, dark, sleepless night! how slowly did the hours drag by!

God be praised, it is day again!

* * * * * *

When I came to the office this morning there was a letter for me.

I broke it and read it. It was from her.

She had written it shortly before dawn; no thought of rest had come to her.

"My beloved:—

"You are my beloved; no one in all the world can deny me the right to love you, even though you be married ten thousand times.

"Do not come to see me today; do not come till I send for you. I know nothing yet. I have no consolation, no hope, no help neither for you nor for myself. It came so suddenly. Not for one single moment did I ever dream of you being a married man; not once in all these months and years did the thought that you could and would marry enter my mind. And yet—why should you not? I had told you that I would never be yours. You had the right to marry. I could not expect you to live all your days single as I. For I am a woman, and you are a man.

"I am yours though, and you belong to me even though the law of man binds you to another woman. I cannot and will not lose you forever. I must see you once in a while—once in a while. I do not demand it, I do not even ask it, for perhaps I have no right any longer to ask. But I go down on my knees before you; kneel to you and pray and entreat that you will come and see me, because you are all the sunshine in my exis-

tence. Without you the gloom of the grave would be like daylight compared with the darkness that would encompass me.

"But do not come until I send for you. I cannot—must not see you now. I must gain control over myself, must learn to be strong, must be able to see the circumstances clearly. I would not want you to see me a second time as you saw me last night, for then I should feel that your love would surely die.

"I want time to think it all over, and yet, Sven, I am afraid to think. Thoughts and love—love as mine—do not belong to each other. The love I gave you, which was my life, I gave without thought, without consideration, blindly, utter, utter blindly. There was no room for thoughts because my whole being was wrapped up in you.

"But I will send for you some day. Will you come then?

"God in heaven, if you should not come!

"But no, you will—you will come to me, sweetheart, come to the one whose life you are.

HELEN."

It was written with trembling hand, but no trace of tears. There are sorrows that are so great that they have no tears to soften them, and I knew that hers was such a sorrow.

Do you doubt that I will come?

No, if all the world tumbled beneath me and fell to ruins, I should come.

There are times when I wish that my wife was untrue to me.

So deeply have I sunk in the depth of disgrace.

* * * * * *

I am ill.

This continued worry, the doubts, the remorse, the self-reproaches are undermining my strength. I am growing old.

And the long, terrible nights when sleep and rest will not come! Even if I could sleep, I should be afraid to, lest, in my dreams, I should divulge that which I am fighting to keep a secret.

She does not sleep well of late, either. She wakes up at the least little noise, if I turn over ever so carefully. And she will soon need every atom of strength and health.

* * * * * *

I had fever when I left this morning, but I had to go.

There was no letter from her. That means that she is still fighting the battle in her heart; that every hour to her is suffering—innocent suffering for my sake.

And I feel as if I were the greatest sinner on earth.

* * * * * *

No letter—no words!
I am ill, body and soul.
I can hardly keep up.

* * * * * *

Not a word!

I went to the office this morning, and I wrote:

"Dearest:—

"I am sick and must go to bed. You will hear from me as soon as I am able to be up. Do not write till then. And try to be brave—the brave girl I knew and loved.

"God bless and keep you!

SVEN."

I mailed the letter and went home and to bed.

* * * * * *

More than a month has passed.

Life and death have fought for the possession of my poor body. Brain-fever the doctor called it. Heart-fever I should have named it. And death came near getting the upper hand. But life conquered at last. Why? God only knows. I thought I had been punished enough.

I am up to-day for the first time. And I see that weeks have passed since I wrote on these leaves.

What has happened? I do not know. I have been in the land where thoughts are lost in fever-dreams; unconscious of all and everything.

Only once I awoke to consciousness. It was night. A candle burned on the table near my bed. And my wife lay on her knees by my bedside in her thin, white night-dress. Her hands rested on the cover, and her head had sunk down on her hands as if she were praying.

That is all I remember.

Now she is sitting in the rocking chair—sleeping.

She needs it.

She has grown so quiet, so thin and frail, almost transparent. And her eyes are dull and lusterless. She has watched over me night after night, all alone—would not let any one else do it. Watched over me!

She must have suffered terribly during those long weeks.

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And if—my God, I dare not think of it—if in my fever-dreams I have called for her—the other!

Not in such a way must she learn the truth, not in that way. Far, far rather would I tell it to her face to face.

But I have not spoken her name; I could not, no matter how wild my fever-dreams may have been. I should have waked in terror to consciousness if a word had escaped my lips.

And she would have told me. But she has said nothing.

Oh, if I could but learn to love you, you who suffer and bring sacrifices for my sake, unworthy as I am.

What is it you love in me? I do not know.

And what has become of you, Helen?

Have you prayed for me? Have you walked in fear and agony for my life? And have you found the peace you longed for, peace for yourself, peace for me—the solution of it all?

No word can I send you; I have no one I dare trust, and I am too weak to go myself.

No doubt I should thank Providence that life was stronger than death. But I cannot—for life is hell, and death alone brings peace. I cannot lick—like a dog—the hand of the master who whips it.

And for you two, who love me, life is one long suffering.

I am tired of struggling, tired of living, tired unto death. But death passes by and does not know me. Some day he will return—and I shall be waiting to greet him with open arms.

* * * * * *

I have written her, but the letter lies still in my pocket. I wrote that I was up again and hoped soon to be able to go and see her.

But I have no one to send with the message.

* * * * * *

I have not yet sent it.

Every day that passes is a year of suffering and agony to her. And I know it.

* * * * * *

To-day my wife has been obliged to go to bed.

She has struggled bravely against it. But the long nights of watching at my bedside robbed her of her strength.

We have changed parts.

Now she lies in there so weak and pale—a white lily the winterfrost of life has bent towards the ground.

I sat beside her bed. She lay so quietly with closed eyes. And my thoughts flew away to the little room opposite the garden of the dead.

My eyelids drooped, and I fell asleep.

And I dreamed I saw her again as I had seen her that last evening, leaning her head against the window frame, and that hollow look in her eyes as they stared, without seeing, out over the church-yard yonder. Two hollow, empty eye-sockets!

I awoke and stole out of the room in here. And I broke the letter to her and added that my wife was sick, that she could write me here—no one would see it but I.

Then I went down and mailed it.

When I came up she was still sleeping. But in her sleep her lips moved, as if she wanted to say something. But no sound passed over her lips.

And then a terrible thought stole across my brain. I tried to chase it away, but it came back

again and again. I wanted to flee from it in here, but it followed me and held me in its terror.

Suppose she died—then I would be free!

I wanted to pray. I threw myself on my knees, but I knew not how. My lips were dry; my throat ached. And the thought was there.

Then the door-bell rang. It was the doctor.

God be praised that he came!

He said that there was no danger; all she needed was rest, absolute rest. And the words were balsam on my heart's wound.

I felt happier than I had felt for many, many months.

And I went into her room and bent over her and kissed her lips. And in her sleep she smiled.

* * * * * *

There came a letter from her this morning.

"My love:—

"Thanks for your note. You can never imagine how happy I felt when I read it. It has been a terrible, terrible time—the worst I have ever lived. The suspense of not knowing whether you were living or dead! And yet, I knew you could not die, dearest, and I still be among the living. For surely my soul should have followed yours to the unknown regions.

"I knew, when I saw you here the last time, that if you took sick, it would be a struggle between life and death—a hard, hard struggle. And sometimes I wished even that death would be stronger, for then I should have had you unclaimed by any other in the worlds beyond. But that was only in the moments when my despair grew too strong.

"Yes, Sven, you shall be grateful for life; you shall thank God, if you cannot for your own sake, thank Him for my sake and—hers. For if you had died, what would life have been to me and—her?

"Tell me when you can come. I must see you; all my soul is longing for you with nameless hunger.

HELEN."

Yes, if I had died what would have become of her? I know she would have followed me to that kingdom where there is no giving into marriage. Her love would have killed her.

But would we have found the peace there?

Death's puzzle no one has solved yet.

* * * * * *

The storm-winds are singing, and winter's breath is on the window-pane.

But in here it is warm.

And memories of days that are no more pass by.

I remember the dark red rose. It withered and faded; the petals fell one by one, and its tender stalk bent low to the ground. Death is so merciless.

Some day he shall bend her slender figure and spread his gray cloak over her.

Some day—but the time has not yet come.

The stem has been bent, but it raised itself again.

Neither faded nor withered!

God be praised!

* * * * * *

I have been out again.

And my first walk was to see her. She opened the door, and when she saw me, her eyes shone as I have never before seen eyes shine.

She spread out her arms wide as if to throw herself around my neck, and then she caught herself, and her arms dropped to her side. She took my hand and held it in hers.

"At last!—at last!" she said. "Oh, how long, how terribly long it has seemed!"

I looked at her. She had changed much. A deep inward struggle was stamped in every line of her face, as if long, long years had passed since I saw her last.

Only her eyes were unchanged. They were the same—wonderfully beautiful, with the same nameless hunger for love written within their depths. And they drew me as they had always done.

She sat down with my hand still in hers and spoke. Soft and low did the words come from her lips.

"Long—you do not know how long the time has seemed. You were so near and yet so far off, so near that a few minutes would have brought me to your side; and so far that I could not even reach you. I dared not write; I dared not send anybody to inquire how you were. I knew nothing."

She hesitated a little and then went on:

"When you left me that evening after you had told me all, there came a moment when I thought that I hated you and her—she, who had stolen life's all from me. But it was only for a moment.

"I have thought it over and over again. You were under no obligations to me; I myself had released you. You had the right to marry. Only one thing do I reproach you, and that is that you ever asked me to marry you. You should never have asked me if you did not love me as I loved you, for you should have known that a love like mine could never be satisfied with a half-hearted love; that I must have all, every thought, every feeling, every living fibre in you. And you could not have loved me thus; for if you had, no other woman could ever have won a place in your heart, not even for the shortest fraction of a moment. If you had loved me, as you claimed, you would still have been free.

"You do not, and cannot possibly understand how hard a blow it was to me. You may say that I knew that I would never be your wife, that I myself had thrown away the happiness when it knocked at my door. I know that. I did not want to become your wife because my love was too strong to ever hold you in bonds which some day might tire you. But while I did not want to be your wife, I wanted to be yours, yours body and *soul. Did I* not give you all a woman could ever

give—honor, life, soul—all! I braved the world's scorn and judgment, and I would have given every day, every hour of my life. But in return I wanted to know that you were mine—mine—and mine alone. I wanted both of us to be free and yet to belong to each other through all eternity. For—free—I could come and go, and you would never have tired of me. If I had felt your love grow cold, I should have left you until it had grown strong again through longing, when you would need me and call me back. I kept myself unfettered; I denied all and everybody for your sake; I lived for you only. And then—to find you married!

"I cannot share with another what I thought and dreamed and hoped were mine alone for all eternity. You must be mine, mine alone—or not at all. I have tried to tell myself that, Sven, but, God! I know what that would mean. I know that we should never meet again in life, for you could not carry on a deceit, and you would not stoop to seek freedom from the one to whom you have tied yourself. Far rather would you make three lives miserable. Perhaps I would do the same. But still I cannot help but think it a crime, yes, worse than a crime to play with love, to pretend love where no love is. To live the life of man and wife without mutual love to bind you together, is a crime. I am not trying to get you to leave her, to win you over. I would not and could not stoop

that low, and I know too that I could not even if I tried. I only want you to know the thoughts that have passed through me since that evening; I want you to understand my position. I have tried to tell myself that I must give you up forever, that I must never see you again, never—even in my thoughts—desire to see you. But, Sven, I am, after all, but a woman, and weak as a woman, and I cannot lose you forever—I must see you once in a while.

"Do not deny me that, Sven. I shall ask no kisses, no signs of love, nothing but to be allowed to be near you now and then and to look into your eyes. Surely that cannot be too much to ask. Even a dog has the right to be near its master. Do not deny me that, Sven,—don't!"

She was kneeling at my feet, looking up in my eyes, pitifully pleading. I could not have spoken had my life depended upon it. I sat silent, neither thinking nor feeling, seeing only those eyes.

But something clutched at my heart-strings, tighter and tighter; and, at last, I bent down and kissed her forehead. And then I sobbed like a child.

For once I had forgotten my own self in the wonder of her love.

"Don't, Sven—don't," she whispered. She was ashen pale, and her whole body shook con*vulsively.*

I took her in my strong arms and held her like a child close to my breast and kissed the pale lips. And the rich color surged back into her clear cheeks. Then I laid her tenderly on the couch and went over and opened the window.

A cold crisp air streamed in.

Over there, in the garden of the dead, the snow lay white and pure. Down on the streets sleighs were passing with tingling bells—a dissonant to the stillness in the room.

And I closed the window and went over to her. I bent over and kissed her white throat and stroked the yellow tresses from her brow.

She lay there so still, with eyes shadowed by the long, dark lashes, with a smile on her lips and hardly breathing; with soul and body drinking in my caresses.

Was it the truth—or was it a lie? I knew not and cared not then.

"My love!" I whispered. And in that moment at least it was the truth.

Her eyes opened wide; she sat up, and her hands caught my coat.

"You love me, Sven?" she cried, an unconscious appeal in her voice. "Tell me!—tell me!—it is life to me!"

It came breathlessly from her lips, and her face was close to mine.

"Yes," I whispered, "I love you, Helen." And again I kissed her coral lips.

Then she sank back on the soft pillows and closed her eyes.

"Go now," she murmured as in a dream. But the smile lingered on her lips.

And I took my overcoat and hat and went out of the room.

It was better so.

I went home like a drunken man.

The words burned themselves in my soul, and the kisses were still on my lips.

Worn out from nursing me my wife lay sick at home, alone and deceived. And I—I had gone to another woman with words of love on my lips!

A moral leper!

* * * * * *

My wife is up again.

But she has grown so pale and thin and frail, so unlike the lily that held the heart of the bee in thrall.

If I could but bring back the color to her cheeks and the gleams in her eyes, how happy I should be! But the healing power of love is not mine.

I am only a sin-weighed sinner, waiting the judgment day. Soon it will dawn.

And the gray chill day slips away. No gleam is cleaving the darkness of the night.

* * * * * *

The winter has gone, and springtime has come.

The sun shines warm and bright over the lake. And the golden rays play hide and seek among the sprouting buds on the chestnut trees.

Young grass is springing on the grave of winter.

The robin is whistling from softly swaying branches, and the sparrows are chirping and twittering.

You beautiful spring! send some of your sun-warm rays, some of your many awakening hopes into my heart. For I need sun that the ice may melt deepest in here.

Winter's fetters are lying heavily on my heart.

* * * * * *

March and April have gone.

I have kept no diary. I wanted to forget, wanted to dull my conscience and all painful thoughts by not lingering over my misery. I tried forgetfulness in my work—and found none.

The comedy is still being played, but the curtain will fall soon. The end is drawing near.

And I almost long for the time when the battle shall be fought between her and me.

I am ready—sure of defeat.

But when the battle is over—what then?

And the time is near when her child and mine shall be born to the light.

God, Thou knoweth that I have suffered. Let me be allowed to bear my child on my arms through life, and lead it on the right roads, that it shall not tread the roads I have trodden. Teach me, when it stretches its small, plump arms up to me and calls me by the name of father, teach me then to take it as a father to my heart.

Let it not suffer for what I have done.

Teach me to love it. Teach me—through the child—to love the one who shall give it birth.

Lord, my God, hear my prayer!

* * * * * *

I was over to see her in Buena Park last night.

I have been there once a week of late. But the end has come. I am afraid of her, afraid of her power over me.

She was dressed in a black tight-fitting dress that seemed to cling to her young body, showing every curve, every line of her beautiful figure. And through the meshes of the black lace the satin like pallor of arms and shoulders shone white as the virgin snow of winters.

She put her arms around my neck and kissed me, and that quivering kiss sent the blood throbbing wildly against my temples. I held her in my arms as that evening in Lincoln Park—only still closer, still nearer, still tighter. And then, of a sudden, I flung her from me and fled from the room.

For many, many blocks I almost ran before I gained mastery over myself.

I dare not go near her again.

I have written her that I could not come for some time at least, as I should be too busy. The excuse was poor, and I knew that she would see through it, but I could find no other. No matter what excuse, it would have been an untruth.

The truth I could not tell, for I alone was to blame. Consciously she had never tempted me. It was not her fault that God had given her all the charms that must arouse the deepest passion in *man.*

It has come to pass.

I am father—father to a wee little boy.

It has been a terrible night and day. The hours have dragged by minute for minute. I have walked up and down, up and down, hour after hour. I could not bear to be with her. Her cries—those terrible screams—have sounded over and over again in my ears.

My God, what she must have suffered, poor little lily!

God be praised it is over!

* * * * * *

I stood by the open window, looking out over the leafless, budding trees, dripping with mist; out over the waters that rolled gray and drearily over the beach. I saw it all, but my thoughts were of her, who carried the first fragrance of love in here; whose smile had lighted the rooms with dawn of sunlit days. I thought of her as she sat on my lap, leaning her head against my shoulder, in the long ago, when the shadows of the twilight were falling; of her, whose rich mellow voice so often had filled the rooms. And then it seemed to me that the clouds parted, leaving room for the glittering rays to steal down over the sun-longing earth.

Some one opened the door and called me, and I followed as in a dream.

I stood on the threshold and looked into the room where I had seen her stand as my bride in

the soft, red glare from the night lamp. Now heavy, drawn curtains were keeping out the light of the day. And beneath the canopy of white curtains she lay.

I had seen her as a girl with girlhood's absorbing love in her eyes; had seen her as bride in her white bridal dress with orange blossoms in her hair. I had seen her as wife at the duties of the home. Beautiful she seemed always, but never before so unearthly beautiful, as she lay there now with the white transparent cheeks framed in by the dark brown tresses, and the large soul-deep eyes, radiant with mother victory.

Not a word passed over her lips, but her eyes sought him to whom she had given life. And then they roamed from him to me and back again to the boy. She stretched her hands out; she held him in her mother arms with infinite love and pride and tenderness, covering him with kisses.

"My boy," she whispered. And then she closed her eyes and sank back on the white pillows.

And through the drawn curtains a stray sunray crept in over the floor and stole up and kissed her lips.

* * * * * *

And I stood by the open window once more, looking up towards the May evening skies. Up there star after star was kindled, only to fade away in a few short hours in the coming day. And down here a life-light had been breathed into a

little human soul. Would that too grow dim and pale and die in the dawn? or would it be allowed to grow in strength and clearness?

* * * * * *

The stars have grown dim and blurred, but the life-light burns still, but so faintly that it may be extinguished before evening.

Is that way, to come nearer to her, to be taken from me too?

And the day opens while life and death fight for the mastery of a child's soul.

But the struggle is long, though death will be conqueror.

* * * * * *

At three o'clock this morning the life-light flickered and died out.

My child and hers has passed beyond to the sunlit shores where no hopes, nor dreams are ever slain; where hearts know of no ache.

"Suffer little children to come unto me."

She did not weep.

"Have I suffered and struggled only for that?" she said, and her voice was strangely calm.

And I cannot grieve, for I feel that it is better so.

Our child's path could never have been sunlit; dark shadows were bound to gather.

But when—a little while ago—they put the little body in the coffin and carried it away, it seemed to me that it was part of my self they took.

And I went in and pressed a long tender kiss on her fever-hot brow. But she did not feel it; the strength had left her, she slept the sleep of exhaustion.

No stars are shining to-night. The sky is dark, covered with clouds.

* * * * * *

I have followed my boy to his last resting place on the still cemetery.

And the little white coffin, covered with flowers, was sunk deep in the ground.

I went home and in to her.

She put her soft, white, blue-veined hands in mine, and the tears broke from under the long silken lashes.

"Now I have only one boy—only you,—but no one will take you from me?"

I could not stand the look in her eyes. Did she know? I bent over and closed them with a kiss.

Then I put on my coat and hat and went out. The air in the room seemed to suffocate me. Aimlessly I strolled down to the beach and sat down. But the small waves, that rolled over the white sand, seemed to whisper: "No one will take you from me," and from behind me the echo rang back: "One will take you from me."

Did she suspect anything? Impossible—and yet—oh God, if I could but tell her all!

* * * * * *

To-day she is up again, and I hardly know her in her long, black dress.

Her face seems still paler—immovable, as if every feature had frozen, so marble cold and still. She is trying to hide the sorrow deep where only God can see it.

The sun shines, and the birds are twittering, but in here is no joy.

A home in sorrow!

* * * * * *

"Why don't you come, Sven? I have waited for you, day in and day out, waited in vain. You promised to come, have you forgotten? Are you sick? Are you angry with me? I do not know, I only know this that no flower can live without sun. Come! Do come!"

It came this morning.

Yes, I shall come, even though I have asked my God to give me strength and will-power to say no.

* * * * * *

At last we have stood face to face without masks, without lies or deceit. She tore the mask off me to-night. It had to come. I have felt the moment draw near since that day when they buried her child. She and I had carried it too long to be able to keep it down any longer.

After dinner she went with me into the drawing room and sat down opposite to me. I knew then that it would come—I saw it in her eyes. And I bowed my head. There was no scene, no tears, no hysteria. She had steeled herself. She spoke so calmly and softly that I wondered at her marvelous self-control.

"Sven," she said, "you are not happy. I know it, and I have known it long. Neither am I. You told me once that there would and should be no secrets between us. Have you kept your promise? You need not answer because I know that you have not. I have no reproaches to make, but, Sven, that which stands between you and me and happiness has got to be cleared away, or it will kill both of us."

She leaned forward, and her voice was pleading.

"Let us open our hearts wide to each other, leaving no single leaf in the dark and unread. Not only do I want you to open your heart to me, I want to do the same to you. And I have much to tell you—all that which I have carried in here *so many,* many long days and nights."

She stopped for a moment and then continued in the same soft, melodious voice.

"I had lived a quiet life. I loved God's beautiful nature, the lilac heather, and my deep woods, as I used to call them. I had no longing for the great city with its sins and sorrows. But then you came into my life, and you took all, changed all. I loved you, your eyes, your lips, your soul, your strong body. All and everything I loved in you. And if you had never opened your lips, if you had never spoken of love to me, I should have loved you just the same in the deepest den of my heart, and should have kept it my dearest secret, my costliest treasure. But when it dawned on me that you too loved, oh, Sven, no woman was ever more happy than I. I could have sung it out to the edges of the world that I loved you—loved you. That I was to bid good-bye to my childhood's home, to every place where I had dreamed my girlhood's happiest dreams, I gave no thought. For I was going with you, and you were more to me than all the wide world.

"I remember the last evening before our wedding. I stole out in the woods, and, just like a little child, I bid farewell to every tree and bush. I told them of you, told them about the brown bee that had come to gather the lily. I bade them good-bye, but there was no sadness, no regret in my leave-taking. For you were mine, and with you I cared not where in the world I went. Oh,

how happy I was the first few weeks! I loved you, loved our little home, every inch of it, and I never dreamed that shadows would and could fall over my happiness. But I guess we all have to taste the cup of sorrows in one way or another. Perhaps it is necessary. They say that sorrows make us better, that a life that ebbs away as gently as a breath of wind that wafts along a feather, would not be worth living. Perhaps it is so, but the cup of grief is hard to drink. First it seemed to me that you showed me less and less attention. It was as if I felt myself growing smaller in your heart.

"There were no storms or rains; but still I could see the clouds gather closer and closer over our home. It was not the life I had dreamed of.

"And then the longing for my home began, and it grew deeper. When you were away I could sit for hours and dream of my girlhood's far off land. But if you came home and were loving and tender, the longing disappeared as dew in the sun. And yet I felt that your love and tenderness were not from the heart. You told me that evening about your youthful infatuation. It left a hurt in my heart, because the picture I had carried of you in here, the picture of all that which is best and purest in man, seemed to suffer. But I tried to forget it.

"Then you took sick, and in your fever-dreams *you murmured* something I could not understand

except one name, which you repeated over and over again. And that name was not mine, Sven. I tried not to listen, but I could not help it. And you will never know what I suffered then. Many a time you would wake me up by calling her name. And every time it was as if some one cut deep, deep into my heart. Not once did you have my name on your lips—hers, and hers only. It was I who nursed you, I who sat awake night after night to tend to your needs and wants, and the thanks I received was—her name. There were times when I grew so bitter that I felt that I must leave you. But I could not, the strings in my heart I could not cut. And when you grew better, I kept it to myself and was silent. I did not know what to do. Your kisses seared my lips; your caresses hurt me because I felt that I shared them with another. Who that other was I did not know then, and I could not have stooped to spy on you.

"I have suffered, but, thank God, it is over now.

"I know too, Sven, all you have suffered. You thought that I was blind, but you do not know a woman. Love is keen, and you could not hide anything from me. One day, when you had gone to work, I found your diary here on the table where you had forgotten it. I did not know what it was before I opened it. And then I read it page for page and leaf for leaf. Perhaps that was

wrong, perhaps—and yet I wish that I had found it long ago, for then you and I would have been spared much.

"Yes, you have suffered, and I shall not reproach you anything. I have perhaps nothing to reproach you. I have read it twice, and the second time I read between the lines. And I understood. Sometimes a woman can see deeper than a man; her love makes her sense keener and sharper. And I knew, when I read it, that, after all, you love me.

"What you have written are but the thoughts of the moment. But in every heart there are deeper feelings, feelings that never are born to the light, not even in a thought. That is why you deceived yourself. But I know that you love me, Sven, love me just as dearly as you did when you wooed and won me."

She knelt down at my feet and threw her arms around my neck and drew my head down to her, looking me into the eyes, deep, deep into my very soul. And in the deepest core of my heart she must have found the assurance, for she whispered:

"You love me, and me only. You have never loved her. Your eyes loved her; your senses craved her. But in me you loved the soul, the soul of the lily no dust could stain, and only such a love can be lasting. For some day the soul sheds its mouldings; the sensuous love dies with the beauty of the body, but the love that belongs to

the soul goes with it far beyond the grave into the kingdom of God. Your senses deafened the voice of pure love within you and sowed doubt in your heart. Tear out that doubt, and let us begin anew; let us build up a new life in sunshine and happiness.

"I have lost my little boy, but I have won back my big boy. Perhaps mother love is greater than any other love on earth, but I cannot imagine that any earthly love, no, not even the love of angels, could be stronger and deeper than mine."

Her soft hand stroked my cheek as only she could do.

Yes, she had spoken the truth. I knew it now, I loved her and her only—had never loved any one else—could never love any one again.

And it sang in my heart like the song of thousands of birds greeting the dawn of spring.

* * * * * *

We stood together at the window arm in arm and looked out in the lingering summer evening.

Millions of stars shone up there, some of them faintly, others so glittering and radiantly.

Over the lake drifted the breezes of summer.

What peace and happiness!

And I pressed her close to my heart and covered her face with kisses. And not one of God's stars shone as brightly as her eyes.

* * * * * *

There was a man who had many enemies—all that which was of the evil in him. And he girded his sword, like the knights of yore, and went out to fight. But the struggle was long, and the day of victory was far off. And in despair he stretched his hands towards God's sunlit skies and cried out:

Eloi, eloi! Lamma Sabachthani!

He had forgotten how to pray.

But then a woman came to him, and she was the way, the truth, and the life.

And it drew towards dawn—the dawn of a sunlit day of victory in his soul.

* * * * * *

You blessed sunshine, you are shining in here.

Where have you been so long? I have not seen you for many, many a day.

Or do you shine only there where happiness dwells? Then send your rays in here.

Shine, shine, you blessed sun!

How beautiful the world is! And I knew it not. But you, my beloved, taught me. With you is happiness.

All those terrible days and weeks I could have evaded if I had but come to you. But it is better so.

There was a time when I could not thank Thee, oh Lord, for the life Thou gave me. God in heaven, see I kneel and pray Thy forgiveness. Thy ways are inscrutable.

* * * * * *

The sparrows are chirping in the trees; they bid good-morning, though the day is no longer young.

But to me it is morning—the morning of life.

And God's sunshine lies over the roads.

* * * * * *

I wrote Helen to-night. And harder task I have never known. I told her all; I tried to break it to her as gently as I could, but she would understand that it was to be farewell forever. And I know that every word would be like a stab in her heart, deadening every hope that had ever lingered in her soul. I felt the hurt deep in my own heart, for I knew her as the blind mole knows its cast. Her soul, her all had been mine, would be mine through all eternity even though her eyes should never more look into mine, even though my lips should never again whisper her name. And still I felt it was better to strike dead with one blow, than to kill slowly by degrees.

I showed Margaret the letter. There was no triumph, no joy or victory, for she understood the boundless misery the letter would bring to a human heart—a heart weighed down by no other sin than love. She had suffered herself, and she knew the cost of her victory. And her heart went out to the conquered one. To the letter she added a few lines of womanly consolation.

* * * * * *

The letter has been mailed. And the evening has come, mild and light.

She sang for me in the twilight the song I wrote for her many months ago:

"One by one the stars are lighted
On the sky.

Darling, did we dream while shadows
  Glided by?
Close your eyes, my bride of summer,
  It is I;
  Let me kiss you while asleeping,
  Night is weeping
Dewdrops on your lashes lie."

* * * * * *

There came a letter from her this morning—not to me, but to Margaret. She read it quietly and then gave it to me. It lies here before me. The sunrays fall around it like a golden frame, but on the letter itself no rays are lingering. For happiness does not dwell where it came from. And yet the sun sends its glittering beams to the poor and forsaken, even to the cell of those who are waiting for death to come. But their hearts have no room for the golden rays.

And I read the letter. It was written in her hand, and the scent of heliotrope clung to it still.

"I thank you for your words. I had not expected it—though I should have known, since—of all women in the world—he has chosen you to bear his name. I shall not write him, nor shall I ever seek him. I give you my promise. I want him to be happy, no matter at what cost. I shall carry the ache in my heart without a murmur. I have nothing left, nothing even to die for, for in the world beyond he is still yours. Do you wonder that I grudge even Christ the cross that held him on Calvary's hill?"

That was all.

Poor, poor little girl! The lee of the cup had always been hers. The chill storms of autumn, the rime-cold winter-nights without sun and light had been her share of the world. Left alone, *almost from* childhood, with not even a *remembrance of* a mother's love, she had been carried

out in the maelstroms of life to battle against the seething whirlpools. And yet—as the violet that breaks through the darkness of winter, through the snow towards the sunlight, thus had been her faith in life. As the petals of the rose keep their fragrance long after the storms of autumn have torn them off one by one, thus had been her love. Poor, poor little girl!

And, as I read the letter over, the doubt begins to creep into my heart anew. And I wonder where do pity and sympathy end and love begin? But the question lies unanswered in my heart.

* * * * * *

The twilight falls over a city, clad to feast.

The stars and stripes are waving in the summer breeze.

Bands are playing far and near, and the noise of fire-crackers rises from the streets.

But from the deepening shadows the stillness and peace of the country are calling to her and me.

Soon we shall dream the summer dreams of a year ago; deeper and stronger they shall rise like a song from the hearts where the sorrows have dwelt.

* * * * * *

Far, far away from Chicago's sultry, sun-baked streets,—far, far away from the dust and the noise.

Evening has come. We sit on the veranda of the hotel, listening to the monotonous and yet ever changing song of the waves as they roll slowly over the white sand. Subdued and faint, for no breeze is stirring the water.

And she sits sunken in reveries, with eyes resting far out where sky and ocean seem to meet in the horizon.

High in the air the gulls are soaring, white in the falling darkness, and even their cries seem to belong to the stillness and peace.

And then the moon rises silver-white behind a veil of light summer clouds.

A last draught, a last deep breath of the salt, pure air, and then we go to rest.

* * * * * *

A flaming red sun over a restless ocean, and the roar of waves against a sandy shore!

We took a long walk to-day along the beach, away from the hotel and the crowd of people. We wanted to be alone.

On the velvet green banks we sat down and looked out over the blue sea with its white-capped crests.

Wide-winged terns sailed through the quivering air, now and then shooting down from high on their prey in the water, and then rose again with steady beat in the azure air.

Like mocking laughter sounded the echo of their cries.

Wave after wave rolled in and spread out over the sand, and then glided back to hide in a coming wave.

And we sat up there on the green banks looking out over the sea that holds so many unknown graves, so many secrets that never shall be told.

She held my hand in hers.

"How grand it is!" she said, "and how happy I am to be here and to have you again!"

And after a while:

"Can you hear how the waves sing? It is as if they sang for us songs of storm-nights out there on the deep when they rise and rise, higher and higher in all their power, crushing everything beneath their towers of waters; and songs *of death and* struggles, of woes and joy."

And then she sang with her clear, mellow voice:

"Waves of the sea,
Kissing the shores of the land of the free
Born on the deep,
Stilled or storm-swept, sing me to sleep.
Sing of the land where the sun never sets,
Where the skies lie blue
O'er the sunlight strand,
Where the hearts of men are tender and true.
Sing of the dreams
That were born in the soft and silvery gleams
Of a summer moon's light;
Of waking hopes that flickered and died
In a storm-bound night.
Sing to me, waves,
Of the flowerless graves
On the briny deep;
Sing me to sleep
As the day-light dies
With rippling laughter and mournful sighs."

The sun began to set in purple glory in the west. Deeper and deeper it sank behind the dew-wet woods.

And the waves ceased their play. Blank, like a mirror, the ocean lay there with the glow of the dying day on it.

Wearied it rested in the summer evening's peace.

Not a murmur, not a sound.

Everything was still—dreamily still.

* * * * * *

What a contrast to last evening!

A winter-gray, storm-flogged ocean with foaming waves breaking over the ridges and bars in over the tide-swept shore.

The storm is tearing and bending low the sun-withered scrubs.

Above is a gray, heavy, cloud-swept sky.

We went for a little walk, but the wind was too strong. So we went back and sat by the window, looking out over the surging waters.

* * * * * *

Glorious days we have spent together in spite of the storm.

The day after to-morrow we leave.

But when the train rolls away, carrying us behind the wind-swept hills, and the ocean vanishes from our view, the gulls from high above will bring us a last farewell from the wide, traceless sea.

* * * * * *

Be still!—be still!

They are singing—listen—singing with life's gladness in their hearts. And then—then—bearing down on the train at the station it comes—the sharp, sudden glare of the head-light rounding the curve—roaring, thundering—nearer and nearer. The rails are shaking under the wheels of the coming train. The voices are suddenly stilled in awe, and then—crushing all beneath its tons of steel, tearing to pieces, butchering, slaying, the express cuts its way into the standing train. A deafening crash—and then—the stillness of death! And on the stillness break the cries and screams. There is blood, blood everywhere; torn limbs and mutilated, crushed bodies where life dwelt a few moments ago.

Out of the wreckage they carried the mangled, lifeless bodies and the few who had not been killed outright. They laid them in the waiting room in three long, terribly ghastly rows. And the air was filled with heart-rending, soul-piercing cries; with sobs and sighs of the dying, with screams of the living.

There a mother, almost naked, her arm torn off, bleeding to death, was pressing the already cold little body of her baby boy to her heart, unconscious of her own suffering; kissing the stiffening lips as if her dying caresses could bring back the life that had flown far beyond human reach.

There two sweethearts, boy and girl still, were locked in each others arms, waiting for the last call when together they should pass into the eternal kingdom of love.

And there—my God!—my God!—Helen!

She lay there among the dead and dying—so white, so still, so terribly still. From the corner of her mouth over the coral lips, now pale as marble, flowed her heart's blood.

I threw myself down; I lifted her head in my lap; I kissed the blood of her lips and the long lashes that had closed over her eyes, and called her name again and again. But no smile rippled over her face; no answer came back from the still lips.

But life had not yet fled; her heart fluttered still. And I caught her in my arms and lifted her tenderly and carried her out of the waiting room, past the hushed crowd, across the road to the hotel. I had no thought but of her. I knew nothing but that I held her once more to my heart, and that never, never again she should rest there.

Across the deserted lobby, through the hall I carried her to my room, pushed the door open and laid her on the bed. Dimly, as in a dream, I saw some one arise, and a voice seemed to speak from far off, but I knew not what and cared not. I had bent over Helen and had loosened her dress. I smoothed the hair from her pure white brow and called to her to open her eyes, to speak. I put

my arm under her head and bent low and kissed her lips once more, when I felt a hand on my shoulder. I looked up, and I looked into Margaret's eyes. I had left her in the room when the collision occurred, not wanting her to see the horror of it, and I had given her no thought until now.

She stood there, with one hand clutching the table for support, pale as death itself; her lips tightly set, her bosom rising and falling convulsively. She looked an avenging angel as she stood there, but my heart was torn in agony—there was no room for fear.

"What is it?" I said, and I knew not my own voice. "Can you not see that she is dying!"

I could not have spoken differently, for in that moment I knew that, if I had to give up all, if I had to renounce my life's happiness forever and evermore and lose her love—in that hour at least I would stand by her, she who had given all—love, honor, life, body, and soul, and had received nothing in return; she, who had borne the judgment of the world for her love's sake, borne it without a murmur; she, who had denied herself everything that could have been hers in order that she might be true to the one absorbing love of her life. In that hour I knew that I belonged to her for the first and last time. But I had yet to learn to know my wife.

Her eyes—cold and sere as a winter-night's *frost—had* wandered from me to the seemingly

lifeless form of the one woman who unknowingly had thrown shadows over her life, perhaps the darkest shadows that can fall in a loving woman's heart. Immovable, as if carved in stone, she stood looking down in the white, beautiful face from which every drop of blood had fled. Minute after minute dragged by—it seemed an eternity; and then, of a sudden, her hand dropped from my shoulder, the harshness died out of her eyes, and she leaned over and stroked the yellow curls from the white brow.

"Poor, poor girl," she whispered.

And as if the words had called back the lingering life and halted death, the pale lips parted, the velvety soft bosom rose and sank in a deep sigh, and the long silken lashes slowly lifted. The living and the dying were looking into each others eyes, deep into each others soul. Then Helen spoke. Her voice was faint as the sigh of the wind over dying roses; the tiny, white hand was pressed against her heart as if to still the pain.

"I loved him so—I—I could not help it. He was all I had—the one passion—the one hope—the one thought that bound me to existence."

Then the eyelids drooped wearily. But Margaret had thrown herself on her knees beside the bed and tenderly she put her arms beneath the yellow, gold-glittering tresses and lifted her head. And tears fell from her eyes as she bent over and kissed her full on the lips.

"Had you but come to me living in all your beauty—I should have loved you as a sister. For, after all, your sin was but mine—love for him."

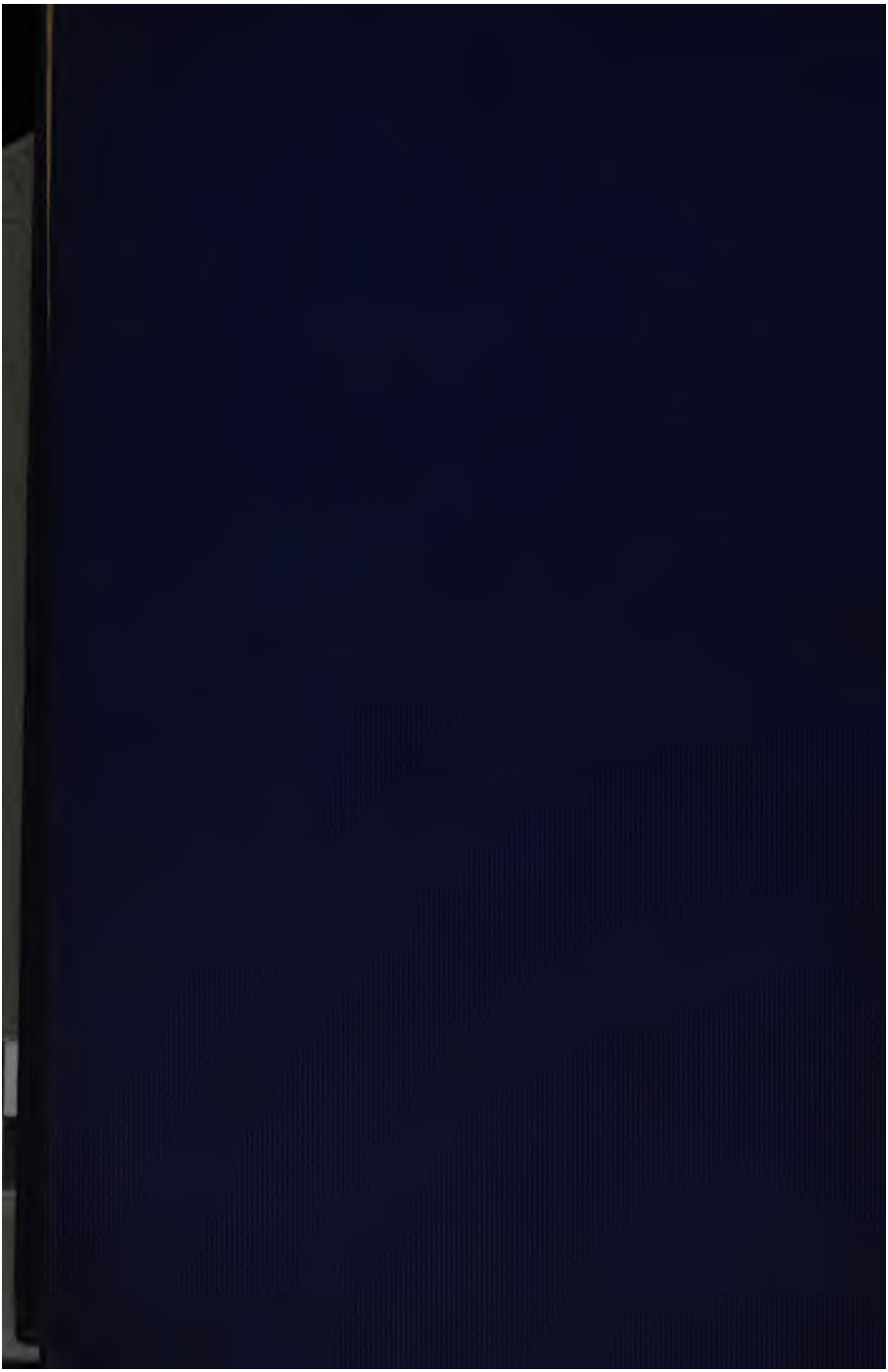
She must have heard the words, for once more the eyelids lifted, and a radiance that was not of this world seemed to spread over every feature. Then her head sank back among the white pillows; her lips parted to whisper the name she had loved best of all, "Sven."

One long lingering look, and the eyelids drooped till the lashes rested on the white cheeks never to be lifted again. Her heart was stilled forevermore.

And the Angel of Death rose in the deepening dusk with a woman's unsullied soul high over the brim of the heaving world up to the kingdom of heaven, to the promised land, to answer the roll call of martyred hearts.

But alone with the dead—as the summer evening slipped away—sat Margaret and I; her head resting against my shoulder, my arm around her waist. None of us spoke, for there were tears in her heart and mine.

I thought of the one, whose soul had carried my name into the realms beyond; I thought of the living, and I wondered:

Whose love was the greater?

THE END